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Note verbale dated 7 April 2008 from the Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

The Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations presents its compliments to the President of the Security Council and has the honour to transmit herewith a reply to the Israeli allegations contained in documents S/2008/131 and S/2008/189 (see annex).

It would be appreciated if the present note and its annex were circulated as a document of the Security Council.

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Annex to the note verbale dated 7 April 2008 from the Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

[Original: Arabic]

Letter dated 7 April 2008 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

On the instructions of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, I wish to draw your attention to the following response to the claims contained in the letter dated 25 February 2008 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council and circulated as document S/2008/131 and to his letter dated 20 March 2008 also addressed to the President of the Security Council and circulated as document S/2008/189.

The purpose of the allegations and distorted facts contained in the above-mentioned letters from the Representative of Israel was to provide a cover for the acts of war and State terrorism which have been perpetrated on a daily basis by Israel in the occupied Arab territories since 1967, including the policy of deliberate killing for which the necessary appropriations are provided in the budget of Israel and approved by the Knesset. These letters from Israel are also designed to cover up Israel's daily violations of the sovereignty of Lebanon and of internationally recognized resolutions, including Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) as confirmed by the Secretary-General of the United Nations in his most recent report on the implementation of that resolution.

Israel's actions in the occupied Palestinian territory and in the occupied Syrian Golan in terms of killing, oppression, arrests, expulsions, the destruction of homes and the confiscation of land, contrary to the Geneva Conventions of 1949, are a flagrant violation of international law. Israel practises a policy of isolation, blockade and collective punishment against approximately 1 million Palestinians in Gaza and attacks the personnel and offices of the United Nations and Palestinian ambulances, and assassinates numerous international peace activists, as well as isolating the population of the West Bank through its continued construction of the separation wall without regard for international demands or the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice. Successive Israeli Governments have followed the policy of collective punishment, which is prohibited under international law and under the four Geneva Conventions, and the scorched earth policy which is punishable under international law; Israel is therefore committing war crimes, crimes of genocide and crimes against humanity contrary to those laws and contrary to international norms and its leaders and politicians must be called to account for those crimes and be brought to justice.

What are described in the letter as "terrorist organizations" comprise Palestinian refugees who were forced decades ago by Israel to leave their land their homes and who aspire to just treatment and to regain their legitimate rights under internationally recognized resolutions. The Arab States, including Syria, have received these Palestinian refugees and have offered them every assistance pending their return to their Palestinian homeland in accordance with internationally recognized resolutions, in particular resolution 194 (III) concerning the Palestinians' right of return. Like the majority of States Members of the United Nations, Syria has

supported the right of peoples to freedom and self-determination and Syria continues to support the right of its Palestinian brethren to stand up for their just cause and for their legitimate right to self-determination, to return to their territory and to establish their independent State with Jerusalem as its capital in accordance with internationally recognized resolutions.

In its two letters, Israel is, as usual, attempting to conjure up flimsy pretexts to justify its violation of resolution 1701 (2006) as well as its non-compliance with hundreds of other international resolutions concerning it. In its earlier letters, the most recent of which was dated 2 March 2008 and was circulated as document A/62/725-S/2008/164, the Syrian Arab Republic responded to Israel's allegations contained in the letter referred to above to the effect that "weapons continue to be transferred through the ... Syrian-Lebanese border in violation of the arms embargo". Syria reaffirms that such allegations are motivated by politics rather than by security concerns and that their aim is to provide cover for Israel's constant violations of Lebanese sovereignty and of resolution 1701 (2006) and to involve Syria in that resolution which was adopted principally in order to stop the Israeli aggression against Lebanon in July 2006. We emphasize once again that paragraph 43 of the most recent report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) pointed out that the joint force for border surveillance in Lebanon "has not discovered any case of smuggling of weapons in its area of operations".

On 25 March 2008, during the periodic monthly briefing by the Secretariat on the situation in the Middle East, Mr. Lynn Pascoe, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, said that during the period covered by the briefing Israeli air violations in Lebanon had increased and that during a single week from 11 to 17 March, according to the report of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), there had been a total of 222 such violations which constituted a breach of Lebanese sovereignty and the Blue Line and undermined the credibility of UNIFIL and of Lebanese national institutions. Mr. Pascoe also referred to the continuing settlement activity in the occupied Syrian Golan which is in flagrant violation of internationally recognized resolutions, in particular Security Council resolution 497 (1981) which regarded Israel's decision to annex the Golan as being null and void and without legal effect. It is a matter for deep regret that the Security Council has taken no steps whatever to deal with these Israeli actions which are in violation of its resolutions while, at the same time, some of its members lose no time in confirming the Israeli allegations and acting on the basis of them in defiance of the facts and of logic.

Syria calls on the international community and the Security Council to assume their responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security by taking the necessary measures to bring pressure to bear on Israel to implement the internationally recognized resolutions, bring its occupation of Arab territory to an end and stop engaging in terrorism in order to bring about a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East on the basis of the relevant resolutions, particularly Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 497 (1981) and the Arab Peace Initiative.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.